# VEDANTA
## and the West

**163**

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
*"Renunciation Alone Is Fearless"*

S. RADHAKRISHNAN
*Spiritual Values in Education*

AVINASHILINGAM: *Training of Youth*

ISHERWOOD: *Some Great Devotees*

WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING
*Recollections of Swami Vivekananda*

Vedanta Press

SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

Rv. lib

# VEDANTA AND THE WEST

RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA
LIBRARY, JAMNAGAR
ACC NO. 422

**EDITORIAL ADVISERS**

SWAMI ASESHANANDA
Vedanta Society of Portland
Portland 1, Oregon

SWAMI NIKHILANANDA
Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center
New York 28, New York

SWAMI PAVITRANANDA
Vedanta Society
New York 23, New York

SWAMI SARVAGATANANDA
Ramakrishna-Vedanta Society of Massachusetts
Boston 15, Massachusetts

The Vedanta Society of Providence
Providence 6, Rhode Island

SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA
The Vedanta Society of St. Louis
St. Louis 5, Missouri

SWAMI VISHWANANDA
Vivekananda-Vedanta Society
Chicago 11, Illinois

SWAMI VIVIDISHANANDA
Ramakrishna Vedanta Center
Seattle 2, Washington

# VEDANTA
## and the West

---

**163**

Sri Rama Krishna Vivekananda Seva Sadan
Shivala Mandir Srinagar Kashmir.

VEDANTA SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Vedanta Press

1946 VEDANTA PLACE • HOLLYWOOD 28, CALIFORNIA

*First Published September-October, 1963*

181.48
VLW

Six numbers of *Vedanta and the West* are issued yearly. Subscriptions are accepted at $4.00 for six issues, postage paid, $6.00 for twelve issues, or $7.50 for eighteen issues. Published issues are available at seventy-five cents each through booksellers or by writing the publisher.

181.48
V 26 V
A 2 2

INDIAN AGENT
Sri Ramakrishna Math
Mylapore, Madras 4

EDITORS
Swami Prabhavananda
Swami Vandananda
Brahmachari Prema Chaitanya
Brahmacharini Usha

*Copyright 1963 by Vedanta Society of Southern California*

Printed in the United States of America

# CONTENTS

**"Renunciation Alone Is Fearless"** 7
*Swami Vivekananda*

**Spiritual Values in Education** 10
*S. Radhakrishnan*
The President of India inaugurates a seminar on education in Madras state with an address of universal significance.

**Religious Ideas in the Training of Youth** 18
*T. S. Avinashilingam*
The founder of a leading center of learning in South India explains why education should aim at the formation of character as well as at the presentation of knowledge.

**Some Great Devotees** 24
*Christopher Isherwood*
The eighteenth chapter of a new biography of Sri Ramakrishna describes his transforming influence on various personalities, including the saintly Nag Mahashay and the bohemian Girish Ghosh.

**The Power of the Mind** 47
*Swami Gnaneswarananda*

**Recollections of Vivekananda** 58
*W. E. Hocking*
One of America's foremost philosophers tells of his first sight of Swamiji in 1893 at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

**About This Issue** 63

# "RENUNCIATION ALONE IS FEARLESS"

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

THE FOLLOWING *free translation by Swami Vivekananda of several verses from the* Vairagya-Satakam (The Hundred Verses on Renunciation) *is published here for the first time. A Sanskrit work of medieval India, the* Vairagya-Satakam *is traditionally attributed to Bhartrihari.*

*The translation is taken from a manuscript, written by Vivekananda himself, which consists of two sheets of paper. One contains the abovementioned verses; the other, which is dated September 1, 1898, contains the first two stanzas of his published poem "Angels Unawares." The manuscript was sent to the Vedanta Society of Southern California by Josephine MacLeod in 1948, shortly before she came to the Hollywood Center where she spent the last days of her life.*

*Swami Madhavananda, who in 1962 became President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, very kindly identified Swami Vivekananda's translation as being from the* Vairagya-Satakam, *and the verses, respectively, as numbers 14-15, 18, 24, 25, 26, 31, 33. Words set in square brackets were also supplied by Swami Madhavananda. The title was provided by the editors. The term "Vidyadharas," in verse 24, refers to demi-gods or spirits of the air.*

Alas, our minds [dally but] in imagination with palaces and pleasure gardens, and thus our lives are spent. [One's]

only food is by begging—and that too is tasteless; one's bed, the dry earth; all of one's family, one's own body; and the only clothing a tattered piece of cloth around the waist—alas, still the desire for enjoyment does not leave a man.

Not knowing the power of flame,
The insect falls into it.
The fish swallows the bait,
Not knowing the hook inside.
And knowing full well the vanities
and dangers of the world,
We cannot give it up—
Such is the power of delusion.

[With rocks cooled by] the spray
of the Ganges waters,
Where the Vidyadharas love to sport—
Have such places in the Himalayas become extinct
That a man should beg [in disgrace] at others' doors?

Have the roots in the mountain forests all disappeared?
Are the springs all dry? Are the trees all withered
That bear sweet fruits and bark for garments
That a man should look with fear on the face
of the fool whose eyebrows are dancing
[In] the wind of the pride of a little wealth?

Arise, let us go into the forest, where pure roots and fruits will be our food, pure water our only drink, and pure leaves our bed—and where the little-minded, the thoughtless, and those whose hearts are cankered with wealth do not exist.

In enjoyment is the fear of disease,
In high birth, the fear of losing caste,

In wealth, the fear of tyrants,
In honor, the fear of losing [it],
In strength, the fear of enemies,
In beauty, the fear of [old age],
In knowledge, the fear of defeat,
In virtue, the fear of scandal,
In the body, the fear of death.
In this life all is fraught with fear:
Renunciation alone is fearless.

[A person's] health [is uprooted by] thousands of [worries] and disease. Where fortune falls open a hundred gates of danger. Whosoever is born, him death will surely swallow. Say, [has] Providence ever created anything that died not?

# SPIRITUAL VALUES IN EDUCATION

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

EVERY GREAT civilization has had its own idea of the purpose of education. The Greeks thought of intellectual power and aesthetic perfection; the Romans opined that civic patriotism, loyalty to the state, is the ideal of true education. In this country, however, we looked upon education as a means for initiation into a higher life, to make the people who are once born, twice born. All of us, whatever may be our caste, community, or religion, are born into the world of nature. The necessity and the purpose of education, the purpose of life on earth, is to make us reborn—*dvitiya janma*, that second birth into the world of spirit and freedom. That has been the ideal which motivated our country from the early centuries. Man as he is has to be surpassed. He is incomplete, he has to be completed. Nature has a scheme of planned development. Just as the intellectual man is quite different from the animal, so also the spiritual man is quite different from the intellectual man. What is necessary is to enable the human being, endowed as he is with intellect, will, and emotions, to act from a higher plane, not from the narrow egotistic plane.

We believe that the qualities of a God-man, a man who has risen to an illumined consciousness from the intellectual plane, are three. They are *abhaya, asanga,* and *ahimsa*. Abhaya, or freedom from fear, is somehing we acquire by deepening our awareness and growing into a larger world.

Asanga, nonattachment, is the way in which we should act in this world. "Whatever work I do in this world, I do it out of attachment to the Supreme, out of devotion to the Supreme." Similarly, ahimsa is freedom from hatred. It is the cultivation of love. The intellect must grow to such an extent that it becomes illumined and free from fear. The will has to be strengthened and conformed to the divine purpose, with the result that we free ourselves from any kind of attachment. The emotions will have to be spread over the whole world, the principle of love should animate us, and we must be free from any kind of hatred—that is ahimsa. Abhaya is illumination which results in freedom from fear. Asanga is detachment. Because you are attached to the Supreme, you are detached from the petty concerns of life. Ahimsa is *vairatyaga*—freedom from hatred. That is the way in which your emotions should grow. You must not breed hatred for anyone, but yet do your duty. So intellect, will, and emotions have all to be transformed if the human being is to reach his goal of complete spiritual manhood.

The spiritual man is as different from the human as the human is different from the animal. It is an inner revolution that has to be effected. It is not merely growing more intellectual or more ethical or more emotional, but becoming quite different from what we happen to be. It is not a question of growing better, it is a question of becoming different altogether. A spiritual man is different from an ordinary human being. How do we attain this highest ideal for which a human being is intended? How can we grow into the fullness of our stature? "Be ye perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect." It is a call to growing perfection. It asks you to develop all your capacity so that you act no more from a self-centered standpoint, but you are rooted in the Supreme and do each one of your activities from that center. Then

the vicissitudes of life, the chances and changes which occur here do not hurt you, do not disturb your equanimity, because you are anchored in the Supreme. You are sure, whatever may happen, that in the sky the sun is shining even though clouds may shut it from our vision. You have that certainty of conviction. You have faith by which you live.

HOW CAN the intellectual man become the spiritual man? How can he grow into his highest fulfillment? All the scriptures of the world have told us that man has to practice meditation, worship, prayer, etc. The transmutation of your personality, the growth from the human to the spiritual is the call laid on every human being. Most of us leave this world without realizing what we are intended for. We think if we make a little money and a little name, and produce offspring, we have done our duty by the world. But the true man realizes that his consciousness should be merged, so to say, in that ocean of *sukha* and *samvit*, in that ocean of wisdom and joy.

He is called upon to cultivate the habit of solitary meditation. He has controlled all his senses, he has no petty, selfish desires, he does not want other people's possessions, etc. He alone has control, is devoid of petty, eager desires, and is non-greedy. It is easy to say, but to bring about that frame of mind is very difficult; but nothing can be reached which is not painful. If your goal is a severe one, your pathway is a difficult one. That is why Swamiji when he went to America said that he belonged to that ancient monastic order, the most ancient which was established in the Vedas, by which men got out of home and meditated in solitary places to get an idea of the Supreme. Loneliness is privation. It is deprivation. Most of us may live in a crowd

and may feel lonely. Solitude is quite different from loneliness.

In solitude, you have your Eternal Companion, the constant Presence, the perpetual presence of the Divine, *Yad yad karma karomi tad tad akhilam Shambho tava aradhanam* (while you are walking or sitting, while you are lying down, or while you are eating). If God is not everywhere, he is nowhere; and if we are not able to develop this habit of solitary meditation, then we will be really lonely in this world. If we develop it, we are able to reach the reality of the Supreme; then it is that we all will be happy in this world whether in company in a crowd or alone and in solitude. So what we are called upon to do is to develop that habit of solitary meditation. And whatever work you do from that point of view, you must do it in a sense of dedication.

We are called upon to practice *tapas*. Panini tells us that tapas is *alochana*, it is reflection; it is concentration on the meaning of life. Most of us think we are pursuing truth but are really far away from truth. If you go to any place, any crowd, the loose talks you have, the back-biting which you come across, the whispers and slanders uttered about other people, the personal adventurism, the attempt to rationalize your private ambitions into national purpose, trying to do whatever you prefer in the name of some truth, some ultimate objective—these are all deviations from the true methods of the search for truth. Everyone at every point in his life must ask himself whether he is honest to himself, whether he is trying to be true to the God who is located in each man's heart. He is there dwelling in each individual. Unless the human being is able to abstract from the world and get at that divine presence, whose presence is adequate for any kind of human predicament, you cannot say that you are really a servant of truth. It is, therefore, essential if you

want to develop any kind of spiritual value, that you must subject yourselves to considerable self-scrutiny. We deceive ourselves first and then deceive other people; and if we want to examine how far this self-deception has gone, it is possible for us to reach the truth only by constant self-scrutiny. That is the meaning of meditation. That is the meaning of alochana. That is the meaning of finding out that behind the panorama of this world there is a Supreme Mystery.

Mere intellectual learning, mere pedantry does not take you to God. Life eternal cannot be realized by knowing the meanings of texts, not by brain power, not by the study of many books; but you can learn the truth only by undergoing a churning of your mind, undergoing a laceration of your heart to get what may be regarded as a remaking of your whole nature. It is not easy. But it is possible for everyone to attain it. If some people have attained it, they are the heralds for the rest of humanity. They are the elder brothers, so to say, who tell us "what is possible for me is possible for you. I am not made differently. The same God who dwells in me dwells in you too." So it is that many metaphysicians and thinkers have searched for a vision of true greatness, a vision of good men, saints, etc. If their stories are listened to by young children, if they patiently go through their tales of woes overcome by attainment of joy, unconsciously the mind is molded. You will see that an impression is made. All influence is not deliberate, not conscious. It is more often unconscious than conscious.

By surrounding people, surrounding young children with examples of true saintliness and great goodness, you unconsciously permeate their minds, perfume them, color their minds with a desire for attaining similar positions, similar achievements. The child is an imitative being, first and foremost. Whatever you say it will do. If you put before it the

ideals of great character, not of military victory, not industrial power, not intellectual eminence, but true saintliness, people who have suffered for humanity, who have laid down their lives that other people may live—if that kind of idea is put before them, I have no doubt that the idea will have some kind of influence on the young people's minds. It is, therefore, necessary that in every school and in every home a little space must be left for the individual to be alone with himself, to examine himself. It is necessary for him to listen to the stories of the great saints and the sages of this world. That will make a tremendous impression. After all, the guru is one who removes your spiritual blindness. Otherwise he is not a guru; he is one who merely talks. He may pick up something and then say he is a pandit. It is not that. The Upanishads tell us that a brahmin should give up his pride in scholarship, his pride of learning, and become like a little child—a little child which is enfranchised, which is completely emancipated from any kind of pride, prejudice, or provinciality in religion or in any other matter. The little child does not believe in caste, it does not believe in its own religion; but we people indoctrinate the child, give him false ideas and make him behave as if he belongs to a superior category. All these we are responsible for; and if it is possible for you to give these people, our young children, the right ideals, they will grow into a world-consciousness, a consciousness where everybody is treated as God's creature, where you never look upon other people as inferior to you, but look upon them as your equals. That sense of equality is a necessary postulate of the reality of the Supreme. If there is a God in this world where all human beings form one family, that is the necessary result. And all the differences we tolerate, we have inherited; they are inconsistent with the reality of true religion.

ONLY yesterday I was saying that religion is either revolutionary or it is nothing. If it does not transform your society, if it does not transform your nature, if it does not bring about a human civilization, it is not true religion. Men like Swami Vivekananda preached religion like that. They taught us that God is not somewhere up in the sky, but he is in the heart of man. The Supreme is to be found in your own self, not in images, etc. Wherever you have *jiva* you have Shiva. Shiva means the in-dwelling divine in every human being. If we adopt such an attitude, we will not behave in the silly superstitious way in which most of us behave in this world today. We therefore must see to it that we rid our society of all the excrescences, the social evils, the inequities which we have imposed in the name of religion; they are a disgrace to the name of religion. Unless we are able to knock them out of our society, we cannot call ourselves truly religious beings. Cultivate your emotions and make them reach the aspect of love while they embrace the whole of humanity; cultivate your will so that every act that you do is done in a sense of dedication to the Supreme, making all people in this world God's people, making every man a prophet of God; and cultivate your intellect so that it becomes really illumined consciousness, to which the differences of intellect become subordinate.

These are the essential spiritual values. Freedom from fear, freedom from attachment, freedom from hatred. The three aspects, intellect, emotion, and will have to be transformed so as to express these great qualities of love, dedication, and abhaya—freedom from fear. Every institution can do it. It all depends on the way in which you teach your children.

In this *Vidyalaya*, where you are sustained by the great examples of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, it must be possible for you to generate that ampler air of

intellectual being, that simple business of living in accordance with the will of the Divine, identifying yourself with the Supreme, co-operating with the cosmic purpose, having no will, no preference, no like or dislike of your own. That is what we have to do, not adventurism, not mere going to temples and coming back, not the muttering of hymns, important as they may be—for the most important thing is to recognize that they are only aids for the development of the true spirit in man. I hope the example of the teacher, the vision of greatness, the habit of solitary meditation—all these things will be imbued in our children's minds at their most impressionable age, which is before they even go to school.

# RELIGIOUS IDEALS IN THE TRAINING OF YOUTH

T. S. AVINASHILINGAM

TODAY, when man is discovering the secrets of nature and finding himself in the possession of large powers, the inculcation of spiritual values has become a vital question. Such powers when wisely used can prove a boon and a lasting benefit to humanity. But they will destroy the world if impelled by base material motives. Therefore we find great people in all lands stressing the cultivation of religious values. Educationists all over the world are exhorting people to create an educational system which will teach such values to our children, for it is in the homes and schools that their mental outlook is shaped.

In this connection it is good to remind ourselves that religion or spiritual life does not consist in following ceremonials or even in the mere study of scriptures. As Swami Vivekananda said, "We may study all the books in the world, yet we may not understand a word of religion or spiritual life. We may talk and reason all our life, but we shall not understand a word of truth until we experience it ourselves. We may be the most intellectual people the world ever saw and yet we may not come to God. On the other hand, irreligious men have been produced by the most intellectual training. It makes

men selfish and exploiting." But the cultivation of the heart takes one to the highest place, which intellect can never reach. It goes beyond the intellect and reaches what is called inspiration.

Gandhi also said: "It is not through books that one can impart training of the spirit. Just as physical training can be imparted only through physical exercise and intellectual training through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit is possible only through the exercise of the spirit." Leading a life of the spirit, according to Gandhi, means the development of the highest character—shaping our lives on the basis of two fundamental principles, truth and nonviolence. By truth Gandhi meant not only truth in speech, but truth in thought and action. When asked how one realizes the truth, he replied, "By single-minded devotion *(abhyasa)* and indifference to all other interest *(vairagya)*. The quest of Truth involves *tapas*, self-suffering, even unto death." Gandhi proclaimed in the manner of the great scriptures of the world the need to follow a life of the highest purity. He said, "Brahmacharya [continence] is the source of all strength. A depraved man can never have the strength and the confidence to do anything great. This requires great watchfulness in our daily thoughts. Eternal watchfulness is the price that a seeker has to pay for leading a higher life."

Swami Vivekananda gave a new definition for religion when he said: "The old religions said he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is the atheist who does not believe in himself. But it is not selfish faith. It means faith in all, because you are all. It is the great faith which will make the world better." The Swami fought against fanaticism and sectarianism of all kinds, and advocated acceptance of all religions as various paths leading to God. He proclaimed: "Let our watchword then be acceptance and

not exclusion. Not only toleration, for so-called toleration is often blasphemy. Toleration means that I think that you are wrong and I am just allowing you to live. Is it not blasphemy to think that you and I are allowing others to live? I accept all religions that were in the past and worship with them all. I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship him. . . ."

REAL RELIGION and life of the spirit, therefore, can be acquired only by the cultivation of spiritual qualities. These qualities have been described in detail in the Bhagavad-Gita: "Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and yoga; alms-giving, control of the senses, sacrifice, reading of the scriptures, austerity, uprightness; noninjury, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquillity, absence of calumny, compassion to all beings, uncovetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, boldness, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of pride; these belong to one born for a divine state." Of these, fearlessness is the first requisite of spirituality. Cowards can never be moral. Where there is fear there is no religion.

As Sorokin mentioned in his book, *The Ways and Power of Love,* unselfish love has enormous creative and therapeutic potentialities, far greater than most people think. Love is a life-giving force, necessary for physical, mental, and moral health. Altruistic persons live longer than egoistic individuals. Children deprived of love tend to become vitally, morally, and socially defective. Love is the most powerful antidote against criminal, morbid, and suicidal tendencies, and against hate and the fear of psychoneuroses. It is an indispensable condition for deep and lasting happiness. It is goodness and freedom at their loftiest. Without love, no military means, no

diplomatic machinations, no coercive police force, no school education, no economic or political measures can prevent the catastrophe of suicidal war. Only love can accomplish this miracle, provided, however, that we know well the nature of love and the efficient ways of its production, accumulation, and use.

Now it is necessary for us to examine the implications of love as they apply to our daily life in various situations. This means consideration and respect for others, noninjury, absence of anger, compassion for all beings, gentleness, noncovetousness, and sharing our possessions for the public good. In order to develop and maintain these qualities, one should develop a sense of discipline—not from fear of external punishment: the urge must come from within. These qualities should be observed not only in public but also in private, when no one is watching us. As Swami Vivekananda remarked, when a great work confronts us and there are thousands of people to admire, then even a coward or egoist may give his life in order to prove himself a great hero. But he who can perform the smallest act without letting anyone know about it, he is a true hero.

Let us be clear in our minds that the spiritual way of life is only for the strong and the brave. Let us be equally clear that it is only this way of life that can give man abiding joy. In this connection, I would like to recall what Swami Vivekananda said to the famous American agnostic, Mr. Ingersoll. This reputed atheist told the swami, "I believe in making the most out of the world, in squeezing the orange dry, because this world is all that we are sure of." To this the Swami replied, "I know a better way to squeeze the orange of this world than you do, and I get more out of it. I know I cannot die, so I am not in a hurry. I have no fear, so I enjoy squeezing. I can love all men and get thousandfold out of it."

Sri Rama Krishna Vivekananda Seva Sadan

How to instill these qualities in the children in our schools is the great question before us. Our educational system should be so adjusted and our school time so planned that, along with book learning, these qualities are also cultivated. It is accepted all over the world that mere presentation of intellectual knowledge is not the sole end of education. Real education should aim at creating proper attitudes. The examination system and the system of recognition should be so evolved that in addition to learning these qualities are also respected and evaluated. Celebration of festivals, sports, games, holding of daily prayers, the performance of daily duties, and a variety of other activities can be used for this purpose.

While considering this matter, it is necessary to remember the large part that the home and the family play in the shaping of the minds of our boys and girls. The human mind is like an iceberg, in which what is seen is but a small part; the part unseen and hidden below the water is the great portion giving direction to its movement. Even so, the impressions made in early childhood act as its background, affecting it for good and bad throughout life. Therefore, no educational system can be effective unless its objectives are shared by the parents and lived in the homes from which its children are drawn.

While the home is important, let us remember that the home is itself a part of a large family, namely, the community to which it belongs. Except for the few who dare to think independently, it is the community that sets the norms for the ordinary man and woman. Standards of conduct, integrity and character, habits of daily life, and even faith in spiritual values—these are all in a large measure guided and determined by social customs. Therefore, it is necessary for the inculcation of higher values that society be made aware of and accept these higher standards, and respect people who follow them.

While the education received in the homes and the community is essential, the schools have a peculiar and great responsibility in this matter. The educational system as a whole should accept these values as valuable and important. While the syllabus, curricula, and methods of teaching and examination are important, we should remember that it is the teacher who is most important in the inculcation of these qualities. If a teacher has faith in these values and applies them in his daily life, he succeeds in inspiring the children he is teaching. Swami Vivekananda said that "One should live from his very boyhood with one whose character is a blazing fire, and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching." Gandhi meant the same thing when he said: "The exercise of the spirit depends entirely on the life and character of the teacher. A cowardly teacher can never succeed in making his boys valiant, and a stranger to self-restraint can never teach his pupils the value of restraint." It is life that lights life; therefore, the living teacher is the most important element of any school.

These great ideas are easily stated, but difficult to apply. An educational system is great or poor according to the extent to which it is able to propagate these ideas. In this mighty task, we who have the privilege of following Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi have a special responsibility. Ours is the great and sublime task of thinking deeply and finding ways and means by which these great qualities can be better cultivated and taught in our schools and colleges.

# SOME GREAT DEVOTEES

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

The eighteenth chapter of a forthcoming book on Ramakrishna

BALARAM BOSE came of a rich family which had estates in Orissa and was noted for its piety and good works. From his youth, Balaram had lived chiefly in holy places, spending most of his time in meditation and privacy. He left the management of the family estates to a cousin and drew from them only a small income just sufficient for his needs. He belonged to the sect of the Vaishnavas—the devotees of Vishnu (God in the aspect of Preserver) and also of his incarnations as Rama, Krishna and Chaitanya. Balaram had married, as we saw in the last chapter, the sister of Baburam Ghosh, the future Swami Premananda. They had three children.

Balaram first heard about Ramakrishna through Keshab Sen's newspaper, and thus became eager to meet him. In 1882, when Balaram was in his late thirties, he had to go to Calcutta to be present at the wedding of his eldest daughter; he took this opportunity of visiting Dakshineswar. He arrived there on foot—this was typical of his unassuming way of life —to find Ramakrishna's room crowded with people; Keshab and a number of his Brahmo followers were there. Balaram did not introduce himself but sat down quietly in a corner of

Ramakrishna's room, remaining there until it was time for the others to go out and eat. Then Ramakrishna turned to Balaram and said, "is there anything you want to ask me?" "Yes, Sir. Does God really exist?" "Certainly he does," said Ramakrishna; but he added that God only reveals himself to the devotee who regards him as his nearest and dearest. Balaram asked, "then why can't *I* see him, when I pray to him so much?" Ramakrishna smiled. "Is he really as dear to you as your own children?" Balaram had to admit that he had never felt as strongly about God as all that. The next morning, Balaram returned to Dakshineswar. As before, he came on foot. Ramakrishna noticed this and was pleased.

During the rest of their association, Ramakrishna worked on Balaram to make him less strict and sectarian in his attitude toward conduct and ritual observances. As a Vaishnava, Balaram had been fanatically scrupulous in his practice of noninjury; he had even thought it wrong to kill the mosquitoes which disturbed his meditation. But when he had been for two or three years under Ramakrishna's influence, Balaram began to question his former scruples: surely, he said to himself, all that matters when you are meditating is to keep the mind fixed upon God? And how can you do that while you are being bitten? He decided to go to Ramakrishna and lay the problem before him.

On the way to Dakshineswar, Balaram continued his debate with himself. He now found that he could not remember ever having seen Ramakrishna kill mosquitoes; on the contrary, Ramakrishna had always seemed far more acutely sensitive to the suffering of others than anyone else he had known. Balaram remembered how once, when he and Ramakrishna were watching a man walking across a field of newly grown grass, Ramakrishna had actually winced with pain and exclaimed that he could feel the man's footsteps like

thumps on his own chest! So my question is answered, Balaram thought; I need not even ask it. Of course he will tell me to practice absolute nonviolence. Balaram decided to visit Ramakrishna, nevertheless.

When he arrived at Ramakrishna's room, he saw to his amazement that Ramakrishna was busy killing bedbugs! As Balaram approached and prostrated, he said in a matter-of-fact voice, "they've been breeding in the pillow. They bite me day and night, and keep me from sleeping. So I'm killing them." Thus was Balaram's question answered for him. Balaram remained convinced, however, that Ramakrishna had killed the bedbugs expressly for his benefit. For if, Balaram reasoned, the Master were in the habit of killing insects, I should certainly have surprised him at it before this, since I've been coming here unannounced at all hours of the day. The Master must have waited to teach me this lesson until he knew that I had sufficient faith in him to be able to learn it.

Shortly after Balaram's first meeting with Ramakrishna, Balaram's cousin had bought a house for him in the district of Baghbazar in Calcutta. The buying of this house was the outcome of a family plot to prevent Balaram from returning to live in Puri, where he had been staying for a while. To Balaram's father and cousin, Puri seemed dangerous because it was a sacred city; if Balaram were to stay there much longer, they feared that he might renounce the world and his wife and children. Balaram agreed to the move to Calcutta, although, at first, he felt unhappy there and longed to return to Puri. But later, as his devotion to Ramakrishna grew, he rejoiced in his new home. Not only could he visit Dakshineswar as often as he wished but he could have the privilege of entertaining Ramakrishna as his guest. During the next years, Ramakrishna and his followers would eat their midday meal at Balaram's house whenever they came into Calcutta; and

they went there also for religious festivals and evening parties. Balaram thus joined the fortunate company of the suppliers of Ramakrishna's wants, which had included Mathur, Shambhu Mallick and Suresh Chandra Mitra. Ramakrishna used to say, "the food Balaram serves is pure; it has been offered to the Lord who has been worshiped by the family for generations. I can eat the food Balaram gives me with pleasure; it goes down my throat of its own accord, as it were."

Ramakrishna would poke affectionate fun at Balaram's chief fault, which was—despite all his hospitality—a certain miserliness. M. quotes Ramakrishna as saying that, at Balaram's house, there were no proper instruments to accompany the singing. "Do you know how Balaram manages a festival? He's like a miserly brahmin raising a cow. The cow must eat very little, but it's expected to give milk in torrents. Sing your own songs and beat your own drums—that's Balaram's idea of a festival!" And again: "One day, Balaram hired a carriage for me from Calcutta to Dakshineswar. He said the carriage fare would be twelve annas. I said, 'surely the driver won't take me all the way to Dakshineswar for only twelve annas?' 'Oh, that'll be plenty,' he said. Before we'd got to Dakshineswar, one side of the carriage fell out. And, besides, the horse kept stopping. It simply refused to go. The driver would whip the horse and then he'd trot, but only a few steps."

Nevertheless, Ramakrishna would continually exclaim, "what a nice nature Balaram has! What devotion to God!" And M. describes how Balaram, while the devotees sat eating in his home, would stand watching them humbly, like a servant. No one would have dreamed that he was the master of the house.

TOWARD the end of 1883, Keshab Sen became gravely ill. His recovery was already almost despaired of when Ramakrishna

paid him what was to be the last visit, on November 28th.

M. relates how Ramakrishna arrived at the Lily Cottage, Keshab's home, with Rakhal, Latu and other devotees. He was received by Keshab's relatives, who took him upstairs to a veranda which opened out of the drawing room. Here they waited for Keshab to appear. Ramakrishna, knowing the seriousness of his condition, kept asking to be allowed to go in and see him. He wanted to spare Keshab unnecessary fatigue. But Keshab's disciples, acting no doubt in accordance with a misguided idea of politeness, insisted that Keshab would soon come out to receive his guest. One of them told Ramakrishna, "Keshab is now an altogether changed person. He talks to the Divine Mother just as you do, Sir." On hearing this, Ramakrishna went into samadhi.

They waited and waited. It grew dark outside. Lamps were lighted, and the party was requested to move into the drawing room. Ramakrishna was helped inside; only then did he begin to return to the pla of normal consciousness. Seeing the handsome furniture of the room all around him, he muttered to himself, "these things were necessary once—but what use are they now?" He recognized Rakhal, with seeming surprise. "Oh—are *you* here?" Then, as he sat down on a couch, his mood became ecstatic again. He talked to the Divine Mother, just as he had talked to Rakhal, "Mother—so you're here too! Why are you showing off in that gorgeous sari? Please sit down." Then, in an ecstatic soliloquy, he compared the body and soul to the shell and meat of a betel nut. When the betel nut is green, the two can hardly be separated; once it is ripe, separation becomes easy. The realization of God is like the moment when the nut becomes fully ripe. After this, body and soul are known to be separate.

Then, at last, Keshab entered the room. He was shock-

ingly changed; a mere skeleton covered with skin. He could scarcely stand and had to keep holding on to the wall for support. Meanwhile, Ramakrishna had left the couch and was sitting on the floor. With great difficulty, Keshab also sat down; he bowed and touched Ramakrishna's feet with his forehead. Then he took Ramakrishna's hand and stroked it gently. "I am here, Sir," he said.

After a while, Ramakrishna became conscious of his surroundings. He began to talk to Keshab. M. notes that at first Ramakrishna spoke only of God; he did not even inquire after Keshab's health. But at length he said, "Why are you sick? There's a reason. Many spiritual emotions have passed through your body. . . . I've seen big steamers going by, along the Ganges. While they're passing, you hardly notice anything. But, oh my goodness, what a tremendous noise there is, when the waves they make start to splash against the banks!"

Ramakrishna compared the process of acquiring the knowledge of God to a conflagration. He said, "The fire of knowledge first destroys the passions, then egotism; lastly it attacks the physical body." Then, changing the metaphor, he likened this process of acquiring knowledge to the treatment of a patient in hospital—saying that Keshab's physical illness was actually a sign of his spiritual transformation. "But," said Ramakrishna, "God won't release you as long as the least trace of your illness is left. As long as your illness isn't entirely cured, the doctor won't give you a permit to leave. Why did you register your name at the hospital at all?" Keshab thought this very funny and laughed again and again.

Later, Ramakrishna compared Keshab to the Basra rose, from which the gardener must clear away the soil down to its roots, in order that they may get as much moisture as possible from the dew. "Perhaps," he said, "that's why you too are

being exposed to the very roots. It may mean that you will do something great in the near future."

Ramakrishna then told Keshab how anxious he had been on a previous occasion when Keshab was sick; adding that, this time, he had been anxious only for two or three days and not to the same degree. This sounded reassuring; but, when Keshab's mother asked Ramakrishna to bless Keshab, he answered gravely, "what can *I* do? It is only God who can bless us all." He continued, "There are two things which make God laugh. He laughs when two brothers divide a piece of land between them. They draw a cord across the land and tell each other, 'this side's mine and that side's yours.' God laughs and says to himself, 'this whole universe is mine, and they take this little clod of it and say, this side's mine and that's yours!' God also laughs when a doctor says to a mother who's weeping because her child is mortally sick, 'don't be afraid, Mother —I shall cure your child.' The doctor does not understand that nobody can save that child if God wills it shall die."

When Ramakrishna had finished speaking, everyone fell silent. The aptness of his words was painfully obvious. Keshab was seized by a terrible fit of coughing. He coughed for a long time, while the others watched him, sad and powerless to help. The coughing left Keshab so exhausted that he could not talk any more. He bowed low before Ramakrishna and made his way slowly out of the room, supporting himself against the wall, as before.

In January 1884, Keshab died. When Ramakrishna heard the news, he was overwhelmed; he would not speak to anyone and remained in bed for three days. Later, he said, "when I heard of Keshab's death, I felt as if one of my limbs were paralyzed." And again, "Oh, how happy we used to be, together! How we used to sing and dance!"

Throughout the rest of his life, Ramakrishna would speak

often of Keshab—sometimes critically or humorously, but always with profound affection.

VERY SHORTLY after Keshab's death, Ramakrishna was walking in the garden at Dakshineswar when he passed into an ecstatic mood, fell and dislocated a bone in his left arm. M., who visited him a few days later, on February 2nd, tells how Ramakrishna addressed the Divine Mother like a reproachful child, "why did you do this to me, Mother? Just look at my arm—how badly it's hurt!" Turning to the devotees, he asked anxiously, "am I going to get all right again?" They reassured him as one reassures a child. . . . But, a few moments later, he was talking and laughing as if nothing had happened. And then he began teaching the devotees how to pray. Was he really suffering? Nobody could be sure. Even while the doctor was bandaging his arm, he laughed and joked.

ONE of Ramakrishna's most remarkable devotees was Nag Mahashay, a homeopathic physician. Nag Mahashay had made a reputation as a doctor in Calcutta before he met Ramakrishna, and he might easily have become wealthy if his code of ethics had not been so strict. From his poorer patients he would accept no fee at all; he would even help them with gifts of food and clothing. From the rich he would accept only his regular fee and the actual cost of the medicines. And in no case would he ask for money; the patient himself had to offer it.

But Nag Mahashay was not content with humanitarianism; he longed to realize God, and spent much time in meditation and religious discussion. A friend and fellow-devotee heard from the Brahmo Samaj of a great saint who was living

at the Dakshineswar temple. He told Nag Mahashay and the two of them went to visit Ramakrishna.

This visit led to others, and soon Nag Mahashay became convinced that Ramakrishna was not merely a great saint but incarnate God. Once, when they were alone, Ramakrishna said to him, "you're a doctor—please examine my feet and see what's the matter with them." Nag Mahashay examined his feet and could find nothing wrong with them. "Look again," Ramakrishna told him, "look more carefully." Nag Mahashay then realized that Ramakrishna was simply granting his unspoken wish, that he might touch these feet which he now regarded as holy. "There was no need to ask him for anything," Nag Mahashay said later. "He could read the minds of his devotees, and he gave them whatever they truly wanted."

Everything that Ramakrishna said, even in joke, Nag Mahashay took to be unqualified truth. On one visit, he heard Ramakrishna say to some devotees, "It's difficult for doctors, lawyers or brokers to make much progress toward God. . . . If the mind clings to tiny drops of medicine, how can it conceive of the Infinite?" That same evening, Nag Mahashay threw his medicine-chest and medical books into the Ganges, resolving to devote himself entirely to the spiritual life. He went to Ramakrishna and asked permission to become a monk. But Ramakrishna told him to remain a householder and keep his mind fixed on God. "Your life will become an example to all householders," Ramakrishna added.

Henceforward, Nag Mahashay and his wife lived lives of the most austere devotion. Ramakrishna had told them to stay at home and associate with holy men. When asked, "how shall I recognize a holy man?" he had answered, "they will come to you."

After Ramakrishna's death, Nag Mahashay and his wife

moved back to Deobhog, his native village in East Bengal, not far from Dacca. And here they made Ramakrishna's prophecy come true in the fullest possible sense, for they received *every* visitor to their home as a holy being, an embodiment of God. No service, no sacrifice was too great to insure the comfort of their guests. They had hardly any money. Nag himself ate barely enough to keep himself alive, and he was a chronic sufferer from colic. Nevertheless, he would never allow anyone to wait on him and he would never fail to provide food and hospitality. Once, when there was no fuel to cook for a guest, he cut down one of the wooden supports of his house. His humility was positively terrifying. Two young monks who came to see him were so embarrassed by the reverence with which Nag Mahashay treated them that they left as soon as possible. He insisted on going with them to the station. The train was crowded, and the other passengers were at first unwilling to let the monks board it. Seeing this, Nag Mahashay was so distressed that he uttered cries of agony and beat his forehead, until the passengers were ashamed and relented. On another occasion, when the house badly needed repair, Nag Mahashay's wife hired a carpenter; but Nag Mahashay refused to let the man work for them. He made him sit down, fanned him and prepared a pipe for him to smoke. When Nag Mahashay had to make a journey by boat, he would insist on doing the rowing himself. For this reason, people would avoid being in a boat with him.

Like Ramakrishna, Nag Mahashay was above all religious prejudice. He made no fundamental distinction between Hindus, Moslems and Christians. He would bow down in front of a mosque and utter the name of Jesus whenever he passed a church. After Ramakrishna's death, he returned to Dakshineswar several times, but he visited the Master's room only once; the experience was so painful for him that he

could not repeat it. Thereafter, he would salute the room from a distance and then withdraw. He would visit Sarada the Holy Mother and the monastery at Alambazar; but he would never consent to spend a night at the monastery. For Ramakrishna had told him to remain in the world, and he obeyed all the Master's directions to the letter.

When Nag Mahashay died, in December 1899, he was already revered as a saint throughout Bengal.

GIRISH CHANDRA GHOSH was born in 1844, in the district of Baghbazar, Calcutta. His parents both died when he was still very young. He got married soon afterwards, but the marriage did not stabilize his life. Girish had within himself powerful forces which were often in conflict: great talent as a dramatist, a songwriter and an actor, a devotional nature, a sceptical intelligence inspired by western ideas, and the sensuality of an unusually strong constitution. He had to earn his living by doing a succession of boring office jobs. His spare time became divided between writing, amateur acting, playing practical jokes, and various kinds of debauchery, violently indulged in for a while, abstained from with bitter pangs of conscience, and then returned to with equal violence. He was, in fact, a bohemian artist; a type already quite familiar to the big cities of nineteenth-century Europe but comparatively rare and therefore scandalous in Calcutta where the strict standards of the old Hindu society were still, despite foreign influences, honored in theory if not in practice.

In Girish's case, talent and debauchery gradually achieved a state of more or less workable coexistence; he continued to indulge his appetites but he also continued to write and act. In his thirties, he had already begun to be recognized as Bengal's modern pioneer of the drama. For centuries, Bengali

drama had been practically extinct. Now here was Girish, producing a vast body of dramatic work in the Bengali language; religious and historical verse-plays on the Shakespearian model and contemporary social plays in the current idiom. At the same time, Girish was training actors and actresses (who all adored him) to perform these plays and was taking part in them himself. Such was his versatility that he often played two or three different roles in the same drama. In 1883, the Star Theater was opened in Calcutta, with his money and under his direction. It became, in effect, the pioneer theater of modern Bengal.

Meanwhile, the conflict between two other forces in Girish's nature—his scepticism and his urge toward devotional religion—continued and could not be resolved. In an article written during his later life, Girish describes his state of mind before he met Ramakrishna: ৯

> At such a crisis, I thought, "Does God exist? Does he listen to the prayers of man? Does he show him the way from darkness to light?" My mind said, "Yes." Immediately I closed my eyes and prayed, "Oh God, if thou art, carry me across. Give me refuge. I have none!". . . But I had nurtured doubt all these years. I had argued long, saying, "There is no God". . . . Again I fell victim to doubt. But I had not the courage to say boldly, "God does not exist."
>
> Everybody with whom I discussed my problem said unanimously that without instruction from a guru doubt would not go and nothing could be achieved in spiritual life. But my intellect refused to accept a human being as a guru.

The date of Girish's first encounter with Ramakrishna is uncertain. In any case, it was highly unsatisfactory. Girish had read in a newspaper that there was a paramahamsa who was living at Dakshineswar and that Keshab Sen was visiting

him frequently, with his disciples. Girish was sceptical of the enthusiasms of the Brahmo Samaj and he decided that this paramahamsa of theirs was probably a fake. However, when he was told that Ramakrishna was to visit the house of an attorney who lived in his neighborhood, he went there to see for himself. It was dusk, and lamps were being brought into the room. Yet Ramakrishna kept asking, "is it evening?" Girish had never before observed anyone in this superconscious state which so often made Ramakrishna unaware of his external surroundings. All Girish saw was this odd-looking man who asked, "is it evening?" while the lamps burned right in front of him. Not unnaturally, he was sceptical and contemptuous. What pretentious play-acting this is, he said to himself, and he left the house immediately.

Some years after this, in early September, 1884, Girish saw Ramakrishna again, at the house of Balaram Bose. This time, Girish was much more favorably impressed. He had expected that Ramakrishna would behave as a holy man was conventionally supposed to behave; that he would sit aloof in majestic silence. But now he saw Ramakrishna saluting the other guests with the utmost respect and humility, bowing his head to the ground. A dancing girl named Bidhu was seated at his side, singing devotional songs for him. One of Girish's old friends came up to him and whispered sneeringly that Ramakrishna and Bidhu must be lovers; that was why he was laughing and joking with her. Even at the time, this insinuation shocked Girish; he did not believe it could be true. But he had not yet become convinced that this was a real paramahamsa. When another of his friends, who was obviously not much impressed by Ramakrishna, said to him, "I've had enough of this—come on, let's go," Girish went with him. He had half-wanted to stay but was embarrassed to admit this, even to himself.

Only a few days after this, on September 21, 1884, Ramakrishna and some of the devotees visited the Star Theater, to see a play by Girish about the life of Chaitanya. Girish himself was strolling in the outer compound of the theater when a member of Ramakrishna's party came to him and said, "The Master has come to see your play. If you'll give him a free pass, that will be very kind; otherwise we'll buy him a ticket." Girish answered that Ramakrishna need not pay for his seat, but that the others would have to. He then went to greet Ramakrishna in person. But, before he could bow to Ramakrishna, Ramakrishna bowed to him. Every time Girish bowed, Ramakrishna bowed; until Girish, fearing that this might continue all evening, bowed mentally instead of physically, and led them all upstairs to a box. He then went home, as he was not feeling well. Thus Girish missed hearing Ramakrishna's delighted comments on the play and witnessing his frequent periods of ecstasy. When Ramakrishna was asked later how he had liked it, he answered, "I found the representation the same as the reality."[6]

Three days later, Girish was sitting on the veranda of a friend's house when he saw Ramakrishna approaching along the street. They exchanged greetings. Girish felt a strong urge to join him, but did not. Then someone came to him with a message that Ramakrishna was asking for him. So Girish followed him into the house of Balaram, whom he was visiting. Ramakrishna was in a semi-conscious state. As if in answer to Girish's previous scepticism, he murmured, "no—this is not pretense; this is not pretense." Presently he returned to normal consciousness. Girish was always longing to find a guru, although, as we have seen, he obstinately refused to believe that any human being could stand in that relation to another. "What is a guru?" he now asked Ramakrishna. And Ramakrishna answered, "he is like a procurer.

A procurer arranges for the union of the lover with his mistress. In the same way, a guru arranges the meeting between the individual soul and his beloved, the Divine Spirit." Then he added, "you need not worry. Your guru has already been chosen."

The conversation turned to the theater. Ramakrishna told Girish, "I liked your play very much. The sun of knowledge has begun to shine on you. All the blemishes will be burned away from your heart. Very soon, devotion will come to sweeten your life with joy and peace." Girish could not bear what he regarded as such utterly unmerited praise. He told Ramakrishna bluntly that he had no good qualities, and that, anyhow, he had only written the play to make money. Ramakrishna passed over this reply in silence. "Could you take me to the theater and show me another of your plays?" he asked. "Any day you like," said Girish. "You must charge me something, though." "All right, you can pay eight annas." "That's the price of a wretched seat in the balcony. It's so noisy up there." "Oh, but you won't have to sit there. You'll sit where you sat last time." "Then you must accept one rupee." "Very well—if you want me to." After this playful exchange, Girish took his leave. A friend who accompanied him asked what he thought of Ramakrishna. "He is a great devotee," Girish answered. His heart was now full of joy. All his doubts and objections seemed to be dissolving; and he kept remembering how Ramakrishna had said, "your guru has already been chosen."

But Girish was a complicated person; a mixture of shyness, aggression, humility and arrogance. Although he had now begun to believe that Ramakrishna might really be the guru he was looking for, a part of his nature passionately resisted this idea. On December 14, Girish was in his dressing room at the Star Theater when a devotee came to tell him that

Ramakrishna had arrived in a carriage. "All right," Girish said, rather haughtily, "take him to the box and give him a seat." "But won't you come and receive him personally?" the devotee asked. "What does he need me for?" said Girish, with some annoyance. Nevertheless, he followed the devotee downstairs. At the sight of Ramakrishna's radiant face, Girish's mood changed; he was filled with shame for his rudeness. He not only escorted Ramakrishna upstairs but bowed down before him, touched his feet, and offered him a rose. Ramakrishna accepted it for a moment; then he handed it back to Girish saying lightly, "only a god or a dandy should have flowers. What am I to do with this?"

That day, the play was about the life of the Child Prahlada, a great devotee, who remained faithful to Vishnu, his chosen ideal, even though he was tortured for his devotion by his father, the demon Hiranyakashipu, who hated God. When Ramakrishna complimented Girish on his art as a dramatist, Girish answered modestly that he wrote without real authority, since he could never assimilate the truths that he taught in his plays. Ramakrishna disagreed, saying that no writer could create godlike characters, as Girish had, without having the love of God in his heart. Later, when Girish confessed that he felt inclined to give up the theater altogether, Ramakrishna told him that he must not do so, because his plays would teach people a great deal.

One night, while Girish was in a brothel with two of his friends, he felt a sudden desire to visit Ramakrishna. Despite the lateness of the hour, they took a carriage out to Dakshineswar. They were very drunk. Everyone at the Temple was asleep. But, when Girish and his friends came staggering into Ramakrishna's room, Ramakrishna received them joyfully. Going into ecstasy, he grasped both of Girish's hands and began to dance with him and sing. (This was only one of sev-

eral occasions on which Ramakrishna behaved in this way. The reeling of drunkards made him think of the state of ecstatic bliss, in which he himself would reel. Ramakrishna had been known to get down from a carriage to dance with drunken strangers on the roadside.)

Girish was not always so pleasant when drunk. Once, at the theater, he publicly abused Ramakrishna, using the coarsest and most brutal words. This turned nearly all of the devotees against him. Only Ramchandra Datta tried to defend Girish by saying to Ramakrishna, "Sir, he has worshiped you with his abuse, according to his nature. The serpent Kaliya asked Lord Krishna, 'Since you have given me poison, how can I offer you nectar?'" Ramakrishna seemed pleased by Ramchandra's argument, and said to the others, "you hear what Ramchandra says?" He then told them to get a carriage, because he wanted to go and visit Girish right away.

In actual fact, it seems unjust and a little absurd to compare Girish to a venomous snake. His wickedness has been much overrated. With the devotees who met him in later life, as an almost saintly old man, Girish liked to dwell on his previous sins in order to emphasize the transforming effect of Ramakrishna's grace. He would say melodramatically, "I have drunk so many bottles of wine, that if you were to place one bottle on top of another they would reach the height of Mount Everest." He certainly did drink a great deal and was apt to be violent and quarrelsome when drunk. He frequently visited brothels. He smoked opium for fifteen years before he met Ramakrishna. But there is no evidence to show that he was a seducer, or a cheat, or a hypocrite, or a spiteful slanderer, or capable of cold-blooded cruelty.

Meanwhile, Ramakrishna's influence was steadily gaining its hold upon Girish. One night, Girish drank himself into unconsciousness at the house of a prostitute. In the morning,

he hastened to visit Ramakrishna. He was full of remorse, but had not neglected to bring a bottle of wine with him in the carriage. On arriving at Dakshineswar, he made a tremendous scene of repentance, weeping and embracing Ramakrishna's feet. Then, suddenly, he felt in urgent need of a drink, and discovered, to his dismay, that the carriage had already driven off. But now Ramakrishna smilingly produced not only the bottle, but Girish's shoes and scarf as well; he had privately told a devotee to bring them from the carriage, before it left. Girish could not control himself; he drank shamelessly before them all—and, having done so, was again repentant. "Drink to your heart's content," Ramakrishna told him, "it won't be for much longer." Girish said later that this was the beginning of his abstention from intoxicating drinks. But the abstention was gradual; and this was certainly not the last time that Girish was drunk in Ramakrishna's presence.

Girish had a writer's scepticism about the authority of the written word; he knew only too well how easy it was for him to compose fine phrases. "I don't want advice," he once told Ramakrishna, "I have written cartloads of advice to others. It doesn't help me. Do something to transform my life." Ramakrishna was greatly pleased by this proof of Girish's faith in him. He told his nephew Ramlal to recite a verse from the Scriptures, "Go into solitude and shut yourself in a cave—peace is not there. Peace is where faith is. Faith is at the root of all things." Girish asked again if he should give up his work in the theater. Ramakrishna told him to continue it. He now treated Girish with fatherly affection, as though he were a little child, and often fed him sweets with his own hands.

Then, one day, Ramakrishna told Girish that he must remember God at least twice a day; once in the morning and once in the evening, no matter how much work he had to d

Girish agreed that this sounded simple enough. But then he reflected that his life was so disorganized, so busy, so much at the mercy of impulses and emergencies, that he did not even have fixed hours for eating or sleeping; how could he promise to remember God? He couldn't conscientiously do so. "Very well," said Ramakrishna, "then remember God just before you eat or sleep, no matter what time that is." But Girish would not make even such a promise. The truth was that any kind of self-discipline was repugnant to him. "In that case," said Ramakrishna, "you must give me your power of attorney. From this moment on, I'll take full responsibility for you. You won't have to do anything at all."

Girish was delighted. This was what he had been wanting all the time; to be rid of responsibility and guilt for ever. He agreed to Ramakrishna's suggestion and thought to himself, now I shall be as free as air.

But Girish was quite wrong—as he soon found out. He was not free, now; he had made himself Ramakrishna's slave. One day, when Girish happened to remark, about some altogether unimportant matter, "I shall do this," Ramakrishna corrected him, saying, "you mustn't talk in that dogmatic way; say—I shall do this if God wills." Henceforward, Girish tried to surrender his will altogether to Ramakrishna. In later years, he used to tell young devotees that the way of complete self-surrender in the religious life was actually much harder than the way of self-reliance and effort. "Look at me," he would add, "I'm not even free to breathe!" meaning that he felt that he could not perform any action of his will, without the help of the Lord.

Girish died in 1912, after many ups and downs of fortune; a nobly battered figure, steadfast to the end in his devotion to Ramakrishna. One curious result of their association is that, today, Ramakrishna's picture is to be found

hanging backstage in nearly every theater in Calcutta. The actors bow to it before they make their entrances. By giving his approval to Girish's art and encouraging him to continue practicing it, Ramakrishna became, as it were, the patron saint of the drama in Bengal.

AGHOREMANI DEVI was a brahmin. She had been widowed when still a young girl, and had settled down in the precincts of a Krishna temple at Kamarhati, about three miles along the Ganges north of Dakshineswar. She had been initiated by a guru who was a Vaishnava, and had devoted herself to the worship of Gopala, the baby Krishna. For this reason, she was usually known as Gopaler Ma, Gopala's Mother. She had been living this solitary pious life for thirty years.

Aghoremani probably visited Ramakrishna for the first time in 1884, with another woman devotee. A few days later, she returned alone, bringing some sandesh with her. She had been unable to get any fresh sandesh at the market, and this was stale; she had brought it only because she had nothing else, and custom demanded a formal offering when you visited a holy man. To her dismay, Ramakrishna actually wanted to eat the sandesh, and to her astonishment, he seemed to relish it. "I feel a great desire to eat food that has been cooked by you," he told her, and proceeded to name all the dishes he wished her to prepare for him. Aghoremani had practically no money and did not think she could possibly afford even these ordinary dishes. Besides, it shocked her deeply that Ramakrishna had said nothing about God and had talked only of food. She decided not to visit him again. But something drew her back to Dakshineswar, and this time she brought food she had cooked herself. It was nothing out of the ordinary, but Ramakrishna praised it extravagantly, exclaiming

that it was "nectar." As we have seen on so many other occasions, it was the cook that mattered to him, not the cooking; food prepared by the right hands could actually give him spiritual sustenance.

One morning, while Aghoremani was sitting meditating in her room at Kamarhati, she had a vision of Ramakrishna, with his right fist half clenched, in the traditional attitude of Gopala. She caught him by the hand. As she did so, Ramakrishna vanished and the figure of the ten-month-old Gopala appeared in his place and demanded to be fed. This baby figure seemed physically real to her. It climbed on her lap and on to her shoulders. Wild with joy, Aghoremani carried it all the way to Dakshineswar in her arms.

She entered the Dakshineswar compound looking like a madwoman, her hair disheveled, her wearing cloth trailing on the ground; "Gopala! Gopala!" she cried. She fed Ramakrishna with the food she had brought, and kept declaring that the baby was passing between them, now entering into his body, now returning to her lap. During the next few days, she had a continuous vision of Gopala, accompanying her as she went about her household duties, and sleeping with her at night. When next she saw Ramakrishna, he told her that she need not make japa any more, because she had attained "everything." But she continued to make japa for Gopala's sake; and Gopala became more and more closely identified with Ramakrishna in her mind. These visions continued to come to her for the next two months; then they became rarer. Ramakrishna said that, if she had gone on experiencing them, she could not have lived long. But Aghoremani was very sad because of Gopala's absence.

One day, Naren and Aghoremani happened to visit Dakshineswar at the same time. Ramakrishna always enjoyed confrontations of this kind. He urged Aghoremani to describe

her visions to Naren. She hesitated—for Ramakrishna had only recently warned her that one should never talk of spiritual experiences to others. But he smiled and told her to begin. So Aghoremani, in a voice choked with tears, began to describe how she first saw the baby Gopala. From time to time, she would break off and appeal to Naren, "my child, you are so learned and intelligent—and I'm poor and know nothing—please tell me truly, did these things happen, or did I only imagine them?" And Naren, despite his natural scepticism, was moved to tears. "No, Mother," he assured her, "what you have seen is all true."

After Ramakrishna's death, Aghoremani lived in retirement. Fifteen years later, three of Vivekananda's western disciples went to visit her at Kamarhati. One of these disciples was Nivedita. She wrote about the visit as follows:

> A few of us went, one full-moon night, to visit her. How beautiful was the Ganges, as the little boat crept on and on! And how beautiful seemed the long flight of steps rising out of the water and leading up, through its lofty bathing ghat, to where in a little room—built probably in the first place for some servant of the great house at its side—Gopala Ma had lived and told her beads for many a year. . . . Her bed was of stone, and her floor of stone, and the piece of matting she offered her guests to sit on, had to be taken down from a shelf and unrolled. The handful of parched rice and sugar candy that formed her only store and were all that she could give in hospitality were taken from an earthen pot that hung from the roof by a few cords. . . . On those beads, Gopala Ma had become a saint!

When Vivekananda was told of their visit, he said, "ah, that was the old India you saw—the India of prayers and tears, of vigils and fasts, that is passing away, never to return!"

In 1904, Aghoremani became seriously ill. They brought her into Calcutta, to the house of Balaram. Nivedita, who was fascinated by the old woman, begged her permission to nurse her. So Aghoremani moved in to live with Nivedita and remained there until July 1906. Then, when death was seen to be approaching, she was prepared for it according to the ancient custom, decked with flowers and garlands, and taken to lie beside the Ganges. She died two days later, aged about eighty-five.

# THE POWER OF THE MIND

SWAMI GNANESWARANANDA

GOD, the great Sportsman, in a playful mood projects this universe out of himself. Then he arranges a game of blindman's buff. He blindfolds every entity, whirls it around until its head begins to reel, and then sets it out to find and catch the "king." As soon as the player discovers the "king" and holds fast on to him he scores and is out of the game. Unless and until a player is able to discover God and cling tightly to him, he has to play. There is no way out!

With the human player perhaps the divine Trickster plays a great practical joke. He blindfolds man and whispers in his ear that it is not at all hard to catch hold of the "king" if the player is alert. Then he turns the player around and gives him a push towards the "nine gates" of the house which he has built for the human mind to live in. Let loose, the confused player rushes out through the gates to catch the "king." From the beginning of creation he has been seeking him, going in and out through the gates. The joke is that constantly he is hearing the soft whisper of the "king" which makes him ever hopeful of catching him, but every dart onward proves futile. Thus the game goes on. If one who knows the trick were asked to help the baffled player, what would he advise him? He would say: "He is at the back of your sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, and thought. Turn around and catch him."

We, players in this eternal game, think that we shall

catch the "king" who is all life, knowledge, and happiness by owning and possessing sense objects, but none can find him objectively. The trick is a simple one and yet the hardest of all. Only a few get out. The rest go round and round. Simile apart, if we look within and analyze the psychological truth behind the activities of human consciousness we find that through the "nine gates" of the human body the mind is constantly rushing in and out to seek success, happiness, knowledge, and peace. No doubt in this process it occasionally catches a glimpse of satisfaction, but experiences with the external world only increase its hunger and restlessness. As the result of long experience it eventually learns the lesson of turning around and getting hold of the source of eternal satisfaction, in the inner divine Self. In fact, the most beneficial, interesting and uplifting study for man is his own mind, but how many of us think it worth our while to study the inner being, as to what it is, how it works, and so forth? Modern life, especially, emphasizes phenomena. We are taught constantly to push the mind out of its home, through the gates, scattering it in the form of objects. That is the reason it has lost its subjective power and is wandering like a vagabond over the face of the earth, knowing little, possessing nothing, always discontented and ever weary. The irony lies in the fact that it carries at its back the infinite storehouse of divine perfection. Those who have understood this truth, those who have been convinced that the end and the goal of the journey of life can be realized within one's own being, at once turn within to study, analyze, control, and cultivate the power of the mind.

Very little about the human mind was known by Western scholars until very recently. Even today, in my opinion, their knowledge of the inner man is insufficient, because in their study of subjective man they have applied the same method

as they apply to the study of objective nature. Suppose I want to know all about this lamp, which is beside me. I let my consciousness flow towards this object of my study and branch out in a hundred different concepts, bringing me eventually some knowledge regarding the lamp, but can this be done in regard to the study of human consciousness, which is the subject, the *one that studies*? Can you make the subject the object of your study? The method that has been applied by Western psychologists for the study of human consciousness has been one of inference and synthetic generalization. Physicians, psychologists, and psychiatrists have recorded the detailed history of mental cases of different natures, juvenile and adult, normal and abnormal, and have formed a few hypotheses regarding the laws which regulate the human psyche. This is the empirical method, in which the mind of the scientist, as the subject, is projected upon the changes and reactions that appear on the surface of the consciousness of other minds which form the object of his study. This method is sufficient to know the qualitative and quantitative reaction of any object but not its substantive reality. The question is: How to know the Knower of knowledge?

Thousands of years ago in the Upanishads the rishis declared the futility of the empirical method as a means to know the Knower. To gain the knowledge of the inner reality of man the subjective method of introspection and meditation was prescribed by the Hindu sages. In other words, the outflow of the mind must be checked and controlled; all objective images and ideas must be carefully eliminated. Then the Knower will reveal himself, like the sun revealing itself on the surface of a lake when it is clear and calm. As long as the outflow continues man must wander, seeking, always seeking, but knowing very little of the divine Spirit which he is constantly carrying within him. Some day he must wake up

and stand alone, detached from the entangling fascination of objects and declare: "I have searched every object but I have got nothing but mockery and ridicule. Now I am going to turn around and find the truth within me." Unless and until this change of understanding is attained, it will be impossible to gain knowledge of the Reality of man.

WHAT is our conception of the human mind? Some years ago science dogmatically declared that consciousness was nothing but the result of a certain combination of some of the brain cells, and that the brain cells secrete thought as the liver secretes bile. A few among the modern psychologists have changed their conception of consciousness. By analysis they have come to the conclusion that the mind is the all in all of the human organism, but they admit they do not know what it is. Until recently if you said that diseases could be caused by mental conditions you would have been ridiculed, but today psychologists and psychiatrists have laid bare the fact that it is the mind which directly controls almost everything in the human system. It has been found that even one's physical appearance is determined to a large extent by the nature and reactions of the mind. Thus, psychology and psychiatry endeavor to heal man by analysis, suggestion, and such other mental means. That is very good, but does it open up any further avenues of constructive ideas and endeavor? Western psychiatry studies the process of cure for a diseased mind, but it does not prescribe any method for the culture and further development of a normal mind. Hindu mysticism goes deeper. It prescribes a scientific method for the unfoldment of divine perfection which is inherent in human consciousness. It holds that the mind is a ray, a distorted ray, of the divine Light which is the basic reality behind our consciousness. It is a potential God. When I use this ex-

pression, God, you should not think of any concrete Deity. It is omnipotent, all-pervading Power. Thus the home of infinite perfection is your consciousness, in its pristine nature. When it is not agitated by any disturbance or image-making functioning, when it stands in its own intrinsic glory uninterfered with by any external influence, it is God. It is omnipotent, omniscient, and immortal.

As you are listening to my words, what are you doing? Perhaps you are thinking and forming concepts in your mind. Who is at the back of this process? Let me say that it is the power of God which is manufacturing these thought-images, according to the caliber and capacity of your senses, and the power of your understanding. Your thought-images are made of the stuff of God. They are like images that can be made and unmade out of soft clay. If you want to realize God you must eliminate the illusory conditions of name and form through which God expresses himself in the form of your concepts. Your thought is God manifest, just as the images you make out of clay are clay manifest. The reason you do not recognize the absolute perfection of God in your concepts is that you are distorting that perfection by the limitation of your senses. Let me give you another illustration. You are seeing a moving-picture show. You look at the phenomena appearing and disappearing and enjoy infinite variety of name and form on that small screen. What are these forms made of? What is the basic reality behind them? You designate these forms by so many names; you see men, women, animals, saints, villains, oceans, sun, moon, and everything on that small screen. What are they all made of? There is only one substance which creates the illusion of the many. It is light and light alone which is; everything else there has its existence only in the ultimate substance of light. One ray projects itself through various qualifying media, presenting

before you a veritable cosmos of name and form. How has the light been modulated to create such phenomena? It has passed through a film which again contains different grades and shades of light, thus creating the illusion of a realistic universe of images and figures on the screen. A similar thing is going on in man. Pure consciousness, or *Chit*, is the intrinsic ray of God. Our ego and senses are the film. The universe of concepts and forms appears and disappears on the screen of absolute Existence, or *Sat*. When the light of God passes through the "film" it appears to be influenced by the condition of the senses. The picture is not God as he really is, but it is God just the same. It is God appearing distorted, God appearing qualified by the qualities of the senses.

Why can we not form a clear conception of our consciousness free from any limiting condition imposed upon it? Because we allow our minds to be disturbed by constant stimuli from the external world. Suppose you are trying to see a marine garden. If the water is unclean or agitated, how can you expect to see it? Your consciousness is the pool of water which contains the marine garden of the bliss of God. If you could keep the water transparent and unagitated you would experience the bliss of God. What a pity that we always keep our consciousness exposed to so much external stimuli—the storm and tempest, the dust and dirt of worldly contacts, thoughts, and memories. That is why, although perfection is within us, we cannot realize it. Now, what method are we to adopt for the attainment of that perfection? The method is very simple to state: Learn the art of keeping the "lake" of your mind transparent and calm. Do not allow dust and dirt to accumulate and float on it and divine glory will reflect through the water. It will bring new revelations even to your daily contacts and experiences.

So, my friends, the first and most fundamental truth I would like to present to you from the treasure house of Hindu philosophy is that your consciousness is not the effect of anything material. Your mind is a ray of the light of God. Your consciousness is God. You are God. If you will only cleanse your mind and cultivate its inner potential power, you will see God—nay, you will be God. You do not have to seek anywhere else to find God. God, according to this philosophy, is not a person or an object; it is a Principle, a Power which pervades everything. There cannot be any mind in this universe, no matter how perverted it may seem to be, that does not have the light of God as its fundamental essence. It is God who acts, talks, feels, and does everything else through us all. The human mind is nothing but consolidated God. Through our thoughts and feelings God reveals in a distorted form, qualified by the qualities of the "film" through which the divine Power has to travel. Do you realize the gravity of this message? First of all, understand this one truth clearly: You are the Divine. Know it, not as an allegory but as the most vivid of all truths. What you call life with its acts, thoughts, and feelings is nothing but God, expressing itself through so many limiting conditions, or *upadhis*, as light produces varieties of forms on the screen.

Does this give you any hope or encouragement, any practical suggestion as to how to improve your life? If you do not think seriously about these things, but merely hear them and continue to live the same old life, no amount of wisdom will do you any good. In India it is believed that the river Ganges is the kindness of God and that bathing in it washes away all imperfections. A man once asked the question of Sri Ramakrishna: "Is it true that the Ganges' water washes away all imperfections?" He answered: "Certainly, it is true." "But," objected the man, "millions bathe there and

they are just as imperfect as before." Sri Ramakrishna's humorous but significant reply was: "As the bather approaches the Ganges the devil within, in the form of imperfection, becomes frightened, leaves him, and waits on the branch of a nearby tree. The bather takes his bath and is purified, but as soon as he comes out of the water the devil descends upon his shoulder again!" Many are occasionally stimulated and uplifted by words of wisdom and the consciousness seems to be cleansed and purified, but the trouble is, the old devil is waiting around the corner! If you wish to derive practical benefit from your knowledge you must practice it and make it part of your life.

It is a pity that we pay so much attention to externals. Take statistics of how much energy, time, and money are spent to take care of the physical body and compare them with what is spent for the improvement of the mind: you will be horrified to know that you have been neglecting the most important member of your organism. I wish there were "beauty shops" for the mind! You all know that if the body is not maintained in perfect order it will jeopardize your enjoyment of the world, but do you realize how much more important is the well-being of the inner man? We have given very little consideration to the health and embellishment of the inner self. Very little, if any at all. If you want to live a spiritual life (or even if you just want to enjoy life more fully), you cannot neglect the most important part of the machinery. The body is not to be neglected. It is a wonderful instrument, but one should not allow the main dynamo of the machine to become rusted and out of order. It is time that modern man pays at least equal attention to the nourishment, hygiene, exercise, and rest of the mind as he does to the body.

Let me draw a parallelism: What do you do to keep the physical body in good condition? Firstly, you give it food.

You know that if the body does not get proper nourishment it becomes weak and creates obstructions to your happiness. Good food is not all. You keep it in a healthy environment and protect it from damaging external influences. How careful you are that the things you use are sterilized and not infected by germs. Thus, the second requisite for your physical well-being is the observance of hygiene. Thirdly, you exercise your body and give it enough rest and recreation. Thus, roughly, you give four kinds of attention to your body: Food, hygiene, exercise, and rest. Now, could not the other set of machinery, the mind, demand the same attention from you? Do you give it the food it is hungry for? You refuse to give it its nourishment, so it picks up the crumbs from under the table and as a result it gets weak and diseased. Because it is made of the stuff of immortality it does not die of starvation! Will you adjust your budget so you can daily give some food to the mind? Your cabinet is full of stuff to cleanse your body with, but you should have something equally handy to disinfect the mind. The difficulty is that you cannot buy your "mind-wash" in bottles; you have to prepare it in your own laboratory. Do you give proper exercise to the mind? You may say: "Oh, yes; it is hard to stop it from exercising itself." Do you call it exercise if you are dragged by someone with a rope tied around your neck? Many ropes have been fastened to the poor mind by your various senses and faculties. They pull it incessantly from every direction, almost inflicting the agony of strangulation upon it. Unharness the mind from the yoke of the senses and let it have exercise for its own benefit. When the mind has lost its own status and works like a slave for the senses, there is no chance for it to have any rest. It is made to work, by the stimulation of the senses, even in the state of sleep, while the senses are enjoying their rest. It is only in deep, dreamless sleep that the mind has any freedom from the

senses. Rest for the mind means consciously freeing it from the activities and stimulation of the faculties and senses.

HINDU PHILOSOPHY teaches that the power of the mind is equal to the power of God, and it prescribes practical methods for the unfoldment of this divine power. When I say that anything that God can do the mind can do, you may think me demented. Nevertheless, it is a fact, because that one omniscient Principle, God, is the background of your consciousness. That explains many things—miracles, clairvoyance, healing, and other demonstrations of mental and spiritual power. By steady exercise great powers come to the mind. The scattered mind is like a drunken monkey; whereas concentrated consciousness is God. Just think of it!

Daily exercise in meditation is necessary to control the scattered rays of the mind. Under ordinary circumstances the mind is scattered all over the fields of your experience and is not capable of resting for two seconds on one concept. Try to meditate on anything, say, a lotus flower. You will find how your mind will go on from the flower to the place where you once saw a lotus, or where you heard of one, and then to the people who were with you at the time, and so on. An untrained mind proves to be the target for incessant shots from the machine gun of hidden stimuli. Keeping the mind above the influence of stimuli, bringing it back again and again to the object of concentration, I call exercise for the mind. Shutting the spiritual medium through which different stimuli are agitating the mind I call meditation. When that has been accomplished your consciousness stays in its own intrinsic form, above all limiting conditions. The consciousness is then free from all qualities. Such a state of mind is divine consciousness, but it takes time to advance so far. However, what each one of us can do, to begin with (and with a good deal

of benefit to ourselves) is to give a daily "wash" to the mind so that it gradually gets rid of the dirt which brings disease germs to the inner self. That is not so difficult to do if you understand the principle and consider the attainment of it life's greatest good. Sincerity is necessary. Sincerity and perseverance. If you start upon the path with sincerity guidance will come, either from within yourself or from outside.

Before I close, let me sound a note of warning. If you think, guided by a casual fancy, that you will attain to that state of divine consciousness by a clever trick, you will be disappointed. It is only the "professional," one whose life is lived for that one main objective, who will attain the goal. The curious amateur will be disillusioned in a few days. Apropos of this, a story was told by Sri Ramakrishna: A city school teacher took a fancy to become a farmer. He thought that it would be wonderful to live close to nature, hear the songs of birds, and make his living directly from the bosom of Mother Earth. So he resigned his post in the city and bought a farm. He could not raise a crop the first year as he was absolutely ignorant of farming methods. The second year there was a flood which washed away the little he was able to raise. The third year there was a drought which burnt all the plants. With all his savings gone the disillusioned school teacher was back looking for a job again!

A farmer who is one by profession cannot quit, whether there is flood or drought or cyclone, and so he gains his end. If you are a spiritual "farmer-by-profession" you cannot set your mind to anything else and you will succeed in the end, but if you are just an amateur of fancy, dabbling in it for the thrill of something new, you will lose interest in a short time and will go back to your old life again.

# RECOLLECTIONS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING

NOTHING that is real is inert. If "inertia" is the defining quality of matter—as was once thought—matter could certainly not be the basic reality of the world. The being of a person is far from inert: it is something active even when the person is "in repose," creating a sort of dynamic field. To *be*, as a living self, is to be charged with an outgoing energy wholly independent of effort—to be is to act.

And there are persons with whom one is peculiarly aware of this quiet radiation. To be in their presence for even a brief time may leave a lasting impression. We all carry about with us unsolved problems of adjustment to this many-angled world—without formulating questions, we are living *quests*, unless by some rare chance our philosophy of life is entirely settled. And to meet some person may resolve a quest wholly without his knowledge; it may be simply his *mode of being* that brings the release.

This was in some measure the story of my first encounter with Swami Vivekananda, though I was only one of an immense audience. In connection with the World's Fair in Chicago during the summer of 1893, there was held a "Parliament of Religions." I was a casual visitor at the Fair, just turning twenty, interested in a dozen exhibits on the Midway, enthused by the marvelous architecture of Richard Burnham

about the Lagoon, but also with special hopes related to the new university near by, whose doors had been opened in '91 —I was planning for five minutes with President Harper at his roll-top desk in Cobb Hall. But aside from all this, I had a quietly rankling problem of my own.

I had been reading Herbert Spencer, all I could get of his works. Spencer's "First Principles" had effected an inner revolution in my way of thinking. I was convinced by him: by his arguments for evolution and for a definite rejection of the pretense of belief about things that cannot be known; this new vista was an intellectual victory, but it was somehow a vital injury to think of man as of the animals—birth, growth, mating, death—and nothing more—finis. I had had my religion—Methodism—an experience of conversion with a strange enlightenment which gave me three days of what felt like a new vision of things, strangely lifted up; Spencer had explained that all away as an emotional flurry—the world must be faced with a steady objective eye. The Christian cosmology was fancy.

But still, Christianity was not the only religion. There were to be speakers from other traditions. They might have some insight that would relieve the tension. I would go for an hour and listen. I didn't know the program. It happened to be Vivekananda's period.

The speaker came forward with a calm authority but also with a fraternal at home-ness: "Sisters and Brothers of America . . ." In an instant the immense audience was responding with a thunderous physical wave of greeting and recognition of the accent of inner assurance. He spoke not as arguing from a tradition, or from a book, but as from an experience and certitude of his own. I do not recall the steps of his address. But there was a passage toward the end, in which I can still hear the ring of his voice, and feel the silence

of the crowd—almost as if shocked. The audience was well-mixed, but could be taken as one in assuming that there had been a "Fall of man" resulting in a state of "original sin," such that "All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God." But what is the speaker saying? I hear his emphatic rebuke:

> "Call men sinners??—
> It is a SIN to call men sinners!"

The way for the essential message was thus perfectly prepared; the main obstacle was identified and attacked with an exact aim and power; through the silence I felt something like a gasp running through the hall as the audience waited for the affirmation which must follow this blow. What his following words were, I cannot recall with the same verbal clarity: they carried the message that in all men there is that divine essence, undivided and eternal: reality is One, and that One, which is Brahman, constitutes the central being of each one of us.

For me, this doctrine was a startling departure from anything which my scientific psychology could then recognize. One must live with these ideas and consider how one's inner experience could entertain them. But what I could feel and understand was that this man was speaking from what he *knew*, not from what he had been told. He was well aware of the books; but he was more immediately aware of his own experience and his own status in the world; and what he said would have to be taken into account in any final world-view. I began to realize that Spencer could not be allowed the last word. And furthermore, that this religious experience of mine, which Spencer would dismiss as a psychological flurry, was very akin to the grounds of Vivekananda's own certitude.

FOR several years I lost sight of Vivekananda. My pursuit of learning—since the panic of '93 wiped out my earnings—led me to do my first college work in Iowa rather than Chicago, as a student of engineering. Then, encountering a work of William James, which further disenchanted me with Spencer, I spent four years in Davenport, earning money to come East and study with James. During those years, Vivekananda had begun his great work of founding centers for the Vedanta throughout America. In the course of this work he came to Cambridge. I heard him twice: once in a class in metaphysics, and once at the home of Mrs. Ole Bull on Brattle Street. It was in these informal gatherings that the quality of the man most directly spoke, and I was confirmed in my regard, and my purpose to re-think my philosophical foundations. My work with Royce, as well as with James, Palmer, Dickinson Miller, and others of the great Department at the turn of the century, gave me the mental tools for conceiving a world-unity in terms of spirit, rather than in terms of a redistribution of matter and motion. Deussen's writings on the Vedanta, and James Woods' reports of his years in India, were of further help in this direction—especially, let me say, my conversation with Woods over his translation of the Yoga of Patanjali and his own experiences in that field.

ALL of these experiences naturally made the idea of a journey to India an attractive dream, without the slightest foundation in likelihood. But the time came for its unexpected realization, in connection with a certain "Laymen's Inquiry" which took me, 1931 and '32, first to London, where I met Gandhi in connection with the Round Table Conference, and then found myself in the Calcutta neighborhood, visiting among other places the Belur Math, where Josephine MacLeod and Frances Leggett had helped to promote the great

training place for followers of the Ramakrishna movement. It was like returning to the rootage after many excursions in the fruitage. Tantine had in the meantime become a warm personal friend; and in those sacred precincts my wife and I found ourselves very much at home.

It was during this visit to India that I first met Radhakrishnan and Jawaharlal Nehru and the Poet Rabindranath Tagore, at Santiniketan—and there also Kshiti Mohan Sen the collector of marvelous Baul poetry, and Surendra Nath Das Gupta in Calcutta, a great historian of Vedanta. These unfading friendships and the continuing associations with the Vedanta centers near us in America, and especially with Tantine, while she lived, have helped to keep the memory and the spirit of Swami Vivekananda alive in our own lives.

And I must not neglect to mention the marvelous sculptures of Malvina Hoffman, figures of Ramakrishna as the vital center, of the "Holy Mother of India," and of Vivekananda, in which by the miracle of the great artist, in the permanent silence of alabaster and bronze the life of these life-givers continues to speak.

# ABOUT THIS ISSUE

DR. SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN, India's great philosopher and statesman, inaugurated the Seminar on Spiritual Values in Education at the Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya in Coimbatore on March 31, 1963. The Vidyalaya consists of several schools and colleges, a rural institute, an industrial section, and a dispensary. T. S. AVINASHILINGAM, its founder-head, also serves as a Member of Parliament.

The late SWAMI GNANESWARANANDA established the Vedanta center in Chicago in 1930. His lecture on "The Power of the Mind," delivered in 1936, was made available for publication in *Vedanta and the West* through the courtesy of Mallika Gupta.

WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING, Alford Professor Emeritus, Harvard University has lived for more than thirty years in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, where he owns 670 acres. He grows most of his own food, has his own herd of cattle, and spends most of his day writing. His current project is a book on *The Philosophy of Law*.

At one time (when I was not living up to my ideals very well) I conceived the idea that I was being intrigued against. Out of a few coincidences I "discovered" a plot, aimed at me. Later, when I got hold of myself, I found there had been nothing to it. But for the time being I had been on the borderline of paranoia. This scared me and showed me how easy it is to "go off" if one gets bound up in himself.

Freud's harm was not in his stress on sex. His offense was that he introduced the new idea—or rather put forward the old idea with apparent scientific endorsement—that self-expression is my right and privilege. Indeed, I will be sick if I do not indulge myself.

If it is a fact that the more I think of myself the worse my mental health, conversely it must be true that the less self-concern I have the better off I will be mentally.

This must be what Swamiji had in mind, for sacrifice is the basis of the old Hindu morality. The duty of the householder is to give up his life (that is, personal motives) for others: wife, children, community. The duty of the monk is the same, but greater. His duty is to give up his life for God and all mankind.

When we forget ourselves we are mentally healthy and inwardly happy. Is there anyone more ecstatic than the hero, whose attention is centered on the well-being of another? Each of us has experienced the delight that comes when we take some action that is utterly selfless.

I know all this; let me practice it. Let me cultivate the habit of sacrificing myself every day. Let me think I am doing it for others or for God. In the final analysis, though, I am doing it only for myself. The Western spirit is materialistic, as Swamiji said. But Westerners can also be utilitarian; and nothing is more utilitarian for one's own eventual benefit than self-forgetfulness.

# Vedanta and the Wes

*Vedanta teaches that man's real nature is divine; that it is the aim of man's life to unfold and manifest this divinity; and that truth is universal. Vedanta accepts all the religions of the world and reveres the great prophets, teachers, and sons of God, because it recognizes the same divine inspiration in all.*

## STUDENT'S NOTEBOOK No. 26

Swami Vivekananda once remarked that if the Western people did not tone down their passion for material satisfactions they would turn into a "nation of idiots."

But the pursuit of personal gratification has not diminished, and Swamiji's prediction seems on the verge of coming true. Mental illness is a gigantic problem in Europe and the United States.

Why? It seems to me that there is a correlation between self-concern and mental health—between ego and psychological well-being. The more self-concern, the less mentally healthy I am; the more my ego asserts itself, the more abnormal I will be. The wisdom of our language is revealed in the term "insane with jealousy." The psychotic, we know, is totally bound up in himself. For him no one else exists. "I am Napoleon." "They are doing bad things to me." "I am right; all the others are wrong."

*Concluded on page 64*